



*Then sudden whirling, like a waving flame,  
My beamy fidehion, I assault the dame.*

*Book I. Part II.*

*Painted by B. Smirke R.A.*

*Engraved by A. Smith A.R.A.*

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THE  
*Odyssey of Homer*  
 TRANSLATED  
 by A. Pope



—“fearful to offend, by wisdom sway’d,  
 At awful distance he accepts the maid.”  
*Book VI. l. 439.*

*Engraved by A. Smith. J. E. A.*

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# AGENERAL VIEW OF THE EPIC POEM, AND OF THE ILIAD AND ODYSSEY.

*Extracted from Bossu.*

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## SECT. I.

### *Of the Nature of Epic Poetry.*

**T**HE fables of poets were originally employed in representing the Divine nature, according to the notion then conceived of it. This sublime subject occasioned the first poets to be called Divines, and Poetry the Language of the Gods. They divided the divine attributes into so many persons; because the infirmity of a human mind cannot sufficiently conceive, or explain, so much power and action in a simplicity so great and indivisible as that of God. And perhaps they were also jealous of the advantages they reaped from such excellent and exalted learning, and of which they thought the vulgar part of mankind was not worthy.

They could not describe the operations of this Almighty Cause, without speaking at the same time of its effects: so that to Divinity, they added Physiology; and treated of both without quitting the embraces of their allegorical expressions.

But man being the chief and most noble of all that God produced, and nothing being so proper, or more useful to poets than this subject; they added it to the former, and treated of the doctrine of morality after the same manner as they did that of divinity and philosophy; and from morality thus treated, is formed that kind of poem and fable which we call Epic.

The poets did the same in morality, that the



divines had done in divinity. But that infinite variety of the actions and operations of the Divine Nature (to which our understanding bears so small a proportion) did as it were force them upon dividing the single idea of the Only One God into several persons, under the different names of Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, and the rest.

And on the other hand, the nature of moral philosophy being such, as never to treat of things in particular, but in general; the epic poets were obliged to unite in one single idea, in one and the same person, and in an action which appeared singular, all that looked like it in different persons and in various actions; which might be thus contained as so many species under their genus.

The presence of the Deity, and the care such an august cause is to be supposed to take about any action, obliges the poet to represent this action as great, important, and managed by kings and princes. It obliges him likewise to think and speak in an elevated way above the vulgar, and in a style that may in some sort keep up the character of the divine persons he introduces. To this end serve the poetical and figurative expression, and the Majesty of the heroic verse.

But all this, being divine and surprising, may quite ruin all probability: therefore the poet should take a particular care as to that point, since his chief aim is to instruct, and without probability any action is less likely to persuade.

Lastly, since precepts ought to be concise, to be the more easily conceived, and less oppress the memory; and since nothing can be more effectual to this end than proposing one single idea, and collecting all things so well together, as to be present to our minds all at once; therefore the poets have reduced all to one single action, under one and the same design, and in a body whose members and parts should be homogeneous.

What we have observed of the nature of the Epic

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Poem, gives us a just idea of it, and we may define it thus :

“ The Epic poem is a discourse invented by art, to form the manners, by such instructions as are disguised under the allegories of some one important action, which is related in verse, after a probable, diverting, and surprising manner.”

### SECT. II.

#### *The Fable of the Iliad.*

**I**N every design which a man deliberately undertakes, the end he proposes is the first thing in his mind, and that by which he governs the whole work, and all its parts : thus since the end of the Epic poem is to regulate the manners, it is with this first view the poet ought to begin.

But there is a great difference between the philosophical and the poetical doctrine of Manners. The schoolmen content themselves with treating of virtues and vices in general ; the instructions they give are proper for all states, people, and for all ages. But the poet has a nearer regard to his own country, and the necessities of his own nation. With this design he makes choice of some piece of morality, the most proper and just he can imagine : and in order to press this home, he makes less use of the force of reasoning, than of the power of insinuation ; accommodating himself to the particular customs and inclinations of those, who are to be the subject, or the readers, of his work.

Let us now see how Homer has acquitted himself in these respects.

He saw the Grecians, for whom he designed his poem, were divided into as many states as they had capital cities. Each was a body politic apart, and had its form of government independent from all the rest. And yet these distinct states were very

often obliged to unite together in one body against their common enemies. These were two very different sorts of government, such as could not be comprehended in one maxim of morality, and in one single poem.

The poet therefore has made two distinct fables of them. The one is for Greece in general, united into one body, but composed of parts independent on each other; and the other for each particular state, considered as they were in time of peace, without the former circumstances and the necessity of being united.

As for the first sort of government, in the union or rather in the confederacy of many independent states; experience has always made it appear, "That nothing so much causes success as a due subordination, and a right understanding among the chief commanders. And on the other hand, the inevitable ruin of such confederacies proceeds from the heats, jealousies, and ambition of the different leaders, and the discontents of submitting to a single general." All sorts of states, and in particular the Grecians, had dearly experienced this truth. So that the most useful and necessary instruction that could be given them, was, to lay before their eyes, the loss which both the people and the princes must of necessity suffer, by the ambition, discord, and obstinacy of the latter.

Homer then has taken for the foundation of his fable this great truth; That a misunderstanding between princes is the ruin of their own states. "I sing (says he) the anger of Achilles, so pernicious to the Grecians, and the cause of so many heroes' deaths, occasioned by the discord and separation of Agamemnon and that prince."

But that this truth may be completely and fully known, there is need of a second to support it. It is necessary in such a design, not only to represent the confederate states at first disagreeing among themselves, and from thence unfortunate; but to

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show the same states afterwards reconciled and united, and of consequence victorious.

Let us now see how he has joined all these in one general action.

“Several princes independent on one another were united against a common enemy. The person whom they had elected their general, offers an affront to the most valiant of all the confederates. This offended prince is so far provoked, as to relinquish the union, and obstinately refuse to fight for the common cause. This misunderstanding gives the enemy such an advantage, that the allies are very near quitting their design with dishonour. He himself who made the separation, is not exempt from sharing the misfortune which he brought upon his party. For having permitted his intimate friend to succour them in a great necessity, this friend is killed by the enemy’s general. Thus the contending princes, being both made wiser at their own cost, are reconciled, and unite again : then this valiant prince not only obtains the victory in the public cause, but revenges his private wrongs, by killing with his own hands the author of the death of his friend.”

This is the first platform of the poem, and the fiction which reduces into one important and universal action all the particulars upon which it turns.

In the next place it must be rendered probable by the circumstances of times, places, and persons : some persons must be found out, already known by history or otherwise, whom we may with probability make the actors and personages of this fable. Homer has made choice of the siege of Troy, and feigned that this action happened there. To a phantom of his brain, whom he would paint valiant and choleric, he has given the name of Achilles ; that of Agamemnon, to his general ; that of Hector to the enemy’s commander, and so to the rest.

Besides, he was obliged to accommodate himself to the manners, customs, and genius of the Greeks



his auditors, the better to make them attend to the instruction of his poem: and to gain their approbation by praising them: so that they might the better forgive him the representation of their own faults in some of his chief personages. He admirably discharges all these duties, by making these brave princes and those victorious people all Grecians, and the fathers of those he had a mind to commend.

But not being content, in a work of such a length, to propose only the principle point of the moral, and to fill up the rest with useless ornaments and foreign incidents, he extends this moral by all its necessary consequences. As for instance, in the subject before us, it is not enough to know, that a good understanding ought always to be maintained among confederates: it is likewise of equal importance, that if there happens any division, care must be taken to keep it secret from the enemy, that their ignorance of this advantage may prevent their making use of it. And in the second place, when their concord is but counterfeit, and only in appearance, one should never press the enemy too closely; for this would discover the weakness which we ought to conceal from them.

The episode of Patroclus most admirably furnishes us with these two instructions. For when he appeared in the arms of Achilles, the Trojans, who took him for that prince now reconciled and united to the confederates, immediately gave ground, and quitted the advantages they had before over the Greeks. But Patroclus, who should have been contented with this success, presses upon Hector too boldly, and, by obliging him to fight, soon discovers that it was not the true Achilles who was clad in his armor, but a hero of much inferior prowess. So that Hector kills him, and regains those advantages which the Trojans had lost, on the opinion that Achilles was reconciled.

## SECT. III.

*The Fable of the Odyssey.*

**T**HE *Odyssey* was not designed, like the *Iliad*, for the instruction of all the states of Greece joined in one body, but for each state in particular. As a state is composed of two parts; the head which commands, and the members which obey; there are instructions requisite to both, to teach the one to govern, and the others to submit to government.

There are two virtues necessary to one in authority, prudence to order, and care to see his orders put in execution. The prudence of a politician is not acquired but by a long experience in all sorts of business, and by an acquaintance with all the different forms of governments and states. The care of the administration suffers not him that has the government to rely upon others, but requires his own presence: and kings, who are absent from their states, are in danger of losing them, and give occasion to great disorders and confusion.

These two points may be easily united in one and the same man. "A king forsakes his kingdom to visit the courts of several princes, where he learns the manners and customs of different nations. From hence there naturally arises a vast number of incidents, of dangers, and of adventures, very useful for a political institution. On the other side, this absence gives way to the disorders which happen in his own kingdom, and which end not till his return, whose presence only can re-establish all things." Thus the absence of the king has the same effects in his fable, as the division of the princes had in the former.

The subjects have scarce any need but of one

general maxim, which is, to suffer themselves to be governed, and to obey faithfully ; whatever reason they may imagine against the orders they receive. It is easy to join this instruction with the other, by bestowing on this wise and industrious prince such subjects, as in his absence would rather follow their own judgment than his commands ; and by demonstrating the misfortunes which this disobedience draws upon them, the evil consequences which almost infallibly attend these particular notions, which are entirely different from the general idea of him who ought to govern.

But as it was necessary that the princes in the *Iliad* should be cholerick and quarrelsome, so it is necessary in the fable of the *Odyssey* that the chief person should be sage and prudent. This raises a difficulty in the fiction ; because this person ought to be absent for the two reasons above mentioned, which are essential to the fable, and which constitute the principle aim of it : but he cannot absent himself, without offending against another maxim of equal importance, viz. That a king should upon no accounts leave his country.

It is true, there are sometimes such necessities as sufficiently excuse the prudence of a politician in this point. But such a necessity is a thing important enough of itself to supply matter for another poem, and this multiplication of the action would be vicious. To prevent which, in the first place, this necessity, and the departure of the hero, must be disjoined from the poem ; and in the second place, the hero having been obliged to absent himself, for a reason antecedent to the action, and placed distinct from the fable, he ought not so far to embrace this opportunity of instructing himself, as to absent himself voluntarily from his own government. For at this rate, his absence would be merely voluntary, and one might with reason lay to his charge all the disorders which might arise.

Thus in the constitution of the fable he ought not

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to take for his action, and for the foundation of his poem, the departure of a prince from his own country, nor his voluntary stay in any other place; but his return, and this return retarded against his will. This is the first idea Homer gives us of it.\* His hero appears at first in a desolate island, sitting upon the side of the sea, which with tears in his eyes, he looks upon as the obstacle which had so long opposed his return, and detained him from revisiting his own dear country.

And lastly, since this forced delay might more naturally and usually happen to such as make voyages by sea; Homer has judiciously made choice of a prince, whose kingdom was in an island.

Let us see then how he has feigned all this action, making his hero a person in years, because years are requisite to instruct a man in prudence and policy.

" A prince had been obliged to forsake his native  
" country, and to head an army of his subjects in a  
" foreign expedition. Having gloriously performed  
" this enterprize, he was marching home again, and  
" conducting his subjects to his own state. But spite  
" of all the attempts, with which the eagerness to  
" return had inspired him, he was stopt by the way,  
" by tempests for several years, and cast upon several  
" countries, differing from each other in manners  
" and government. In these dangers, his companions,  
" not always following his orders, perished  
" through their own fault. The grandees of his  
" country strangely abuse his absence, and raise no  
" small disorders at home. They consume his estate,  
" conspire to destroy his son, would constrain his  
" queen to accept of one of them for her husband;  
" and indulge themselves in all violence, so much  
" the more, because they were persuaded he would  
" never return. But at last he returns, and dis-

\* *Odyssey* v.

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## **X      A VIEW OF THE EPIC POEM,**

**“ covering himself only to his son and some others,  
“ who had continued firm to him, he is an eye  
“ witness of the insolence of his enemies, punishes  
“ them according to their deserts, and restores to his  
“ island that tranquillity and repose to which they  
“ had been strangers during his absence.”**

**As the truth, which serves for foundation to this  
fiction, is, that the absence of a person from his own  
home, or his neglect of his own affairs, is the cause  
of great disorders; so the principal point of the  
action, and the most essential one, is the absence of  
the hero. This fills almost all the poem: for not  
only this real absence lasted several years, but even  
when the hero returned, he does not discover him-  
self; and this prudent disguise, from whence he  
reaped so much advantage, has the same effect  
upon the authors of the disorders, and all others  
who knew him not, as his real absence had before,  
so that he is absent as to them, till the very moment  
of their punishment.**

**After the poet had thus composed his fable, and  
joined the fiction to the truth, he then makes  
choice of Ulysses, the king of the isle of Ithaca,  
to maintain the character of his chief personage,  
and bestowed the rest upon Telamachus, Penelope,  
Antinous, and others, whom he calls by what names  
he pleases.**

**I shall not here insist upon the many excellent  
advices, which are so many parts and natural con-  
sequences of the fundamental truth; and which  
the poet very dexterously lays down in those fictions  
which are the episodes and members of the entire  
action. Such for instance are these advices: not to  
intrude one's self into the mysteries of government,  
which the prince keeps secret; this is represented  
to us by the winds shut up in a bull-hide, which  
the miserable companions of Ulysses would needs  
be so foolish as to pry into. Not to suffer one's self  
to be led away by the seeming charms of an idle**

and inactive life, to which the Syren's song invited.\* Not to suffer one's self to be sensualized by pleasures, like those who were changed into brutes, by Circe : and a great many other points of morality necessary for all sorts of people.

This poem is more useful to the people than the Iliad, where the subjects suffer rather by the ill conduct of their princes, than through their own miscarriages. But in the Odyssey, it is not the fault of Ulysses that this is the ruin of his subjects: This wise prince leaves untried no method to make them partakers of the benefit of his return. Thus the poet in the Iliad says, " He sings the anger of " Achilles, which had caused the death of so many " Grecians;" and, on the contrary, in the Odyssey he tells his readers, " That the subjects perished " through their own fault."

#### SECT. IV.

##### *Of the Unity of the Fable.*

**A**RISTOTLE bestows great encomiums upon Homer for the simplicity of his design, because he has included in one single part all that happened at the siege of Troy. And to this he opposes the ignorance of some poets, who imagined that the unity of the fable or action was sufficiently preserved by the unity of the hero: and who composed their Theseids, Heraclids, and the like, wherein they only heaped up in one poem every thing that happened to one personage.

He finds fault with those poets who were for reducing the unity of the Fable into the unity of the hero, because one man may have performed several adventures, which it is impossible to reduce under any one general and simple head. This reducing

• " *Improba Syren desidia.*" *Horat.*

of all things to unity and simplicity, is what Horace likewise makes his first rule.

*"Denique sit quodvis simplex duntaxat, & unum."*

According to these rules, it will be allowable to make use of several fables; or (to speak more correctly) of several incidents, which may be divided into several fables, provided they are so ordered, that the unity of the fable be not spoiled. This liberty is still greater in the epic poem, because it is of a larger extent, and ought to be entire and complete.

I will explain myself more distinctly by the practice of Homer.

No doubt but one might make four distinct fables out of these four following instructions.

1. Division between those of the same party exposes them entirely to their enemies.

2. Conceal your weakness; and you will be dreaded as much, as if you had none of those imperfections, of which they are ignorant.

3. When your strength is only feigned, and founded only in the opinion of others; never venture so far as if your strength was real.

4. The more you agree together, the less hurt can your enemies do you.

It is plain, I say, that each of these particular maxims might serve for the ground work of a fiction, and one might make four distinct fables out of them. May not one then put all these into one single Epopea? Not unless one single fable can be made out of all. The poet indeed may have so much skill as to unite all into one body, as members and parts, each of which taken asunder, would be imperfect; and if he joins them so, as that this conjunction shall be no hindrance at all to the unity and regular simplicity of the fable. This is what Homer has done with such success in the composition of the Iliad.

1. The division between Achilles and his allies tended to the ruin of their designs. 2. Patroclus

comes to their relief in the armor of this hero, and Hector retreats. 3 But this young man pushing the advantage which his disguise gave him, too far, ventures to engage with Hector himself; but not being master of Achilles's strength (whom he only represented in outward appearance) he is killed, and by this means leaves the Grecian affairs in the same disorder, from which, in that disguise, he came to free them. 4. Achilles provoked at the death of his friend, is reconciled, and revenges his loss by the death of Hector. These various incidents being thus united, do not make different actions and fables, but are only the uncomplete and unfinished parts of one and the same action and fable, which alone, when taken thus complexly, can be said to be complete and entire: and all these maxims of the moral, are easily reduced into these two parts, which in my opinion, cannot be separated, without enervating the force of both. The two parts are these. That a right understanding is the preservation, and discord the destruction of states.

Though then the poet has made use of two parts in his poems, each of which might have served for a fable, as we have observed; yet this multiplication cannot be called a vicious and irregular Polymythia, contrary to the necessary unity and simplicity of the fable; but it gives the fable another qualification, altogether necessary and regular, namely, its perfection and finishing stroke.

## SECT. V.

### *Of the Action of the Epic Poem.*

THE action of a poem is the subject which the poet undertakes, proposes, and builds upon. So that the moral and the instructions which are the end of the epic poem are not the matter of it. Those the poets leave in their allegorical and figurative obscurity. They only give notice at the



exordium, that they sing some action; The Revenge of Achilles, the Return of Ulysses, &c.

Since then the action is the matter of a fable, it is evident, that whatever incidents are essential to the fable, or constitute a part of it, are necessary also to the action, and are parts of the epic matter, none of which ought to be omitted. Such, for instance, are the contention of Agamemnon and Achilles, the slaughter Hector makes in the Grecian army, the re-union of the Greek princes; and lastly, the re-settlement and victory which was the consequences of that re-union.

There are four qualifications in the epic action; the first is its unity, the second its integrity, the third its importance, the fourth its duration.

The unity of the epic action, as well as the unity of the fable, does not consist either in the unity of the hero, or in the unity of time; three things, I suppose, are necessary to it. The first is, to make use of no episode, but what arises from the very platform and foundation of the action, and is as it were a natural member of the body. The second is exactly to unite these episodes and these members with one another. And the third is, never to finish any episode so as it may seem to be an entire action; but to let each episode still appear in its own particular nature, as the member of a body, and as a part of itself not complete.

#### *Of the Beginning, Middle, and End of the Action.*

Aristotle not only says, that the epic action should be one, but adds, that it should be entire, perfect, and complete, and for this purpose, ought to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. These three parts of a whole are too generally and universally denoted by the words, beginning, middle, and end; we may interpret them more precisely and say, That the causes and designs of an action are the beginning: that the effects of these causes,

and the difficulties that are met with in the execution of these designs, are the middle; and that the unravelling and resolution of these difficulties are the end.

*The Action of the Iliad.*

Homer's design in the Iliad, is to relate the anger and revenge of Achilles. The beginning of this action is the change of Achilles from a calm to a passionate temper. The middle is the effects of his passion, and all the illustrious deaths it is the cause of. The end of this same action is the return of Achilles to his calmness of temper again. All was quiet in the Grecian camp, when Agamemnon, their general, provokes Apollo against them, whom he was willing to appease afterwards at the cost and prejudice of Achilles, who had no part in his fault. This then is an exact beginning: it supposes nothing before, and requires after it the effects of this anger. Achilles revenges himself, and that is an exact middle: it supposes before it the anger of Achilles, this revenge is the effect of it. Then this middle requires after it the effects of this revenge, which is the satisfaction of Achilles: for the revenge had not been complete, unless Achilles had been satisfied. By this means the poet makes his hero after he was gluted by the mischief he had done to Agamemnon, by the death of Hector, and the honor he did his friend, by insulting over his murderer; he makes him, I say, to be moved by the tears and misfortunes of king Piram. We see him as calm at the end of the poem, during the funeral of Hector, as he was at the beginning of the poem, whilst the plague raged among the Grecians. This end is just; since the calmness of temper Achilles re-enjoyed, is only an effect of the revenge which ought to have preceded: and after this nobody expects any more of his anger. Thus has Homer been very exact in the beginning, mid-

die, and end of the action he made choice of for the subject of his Iliad.

*The Action of the Odyssey.*

His design in the *Odyssey* was to describe the return of Ulysses from the siege of Troy, and his arrival at Ithaca. He opens this poem with the complaints of Minerva against Neptune, who opposed the return of this hero, and against Calypso, who detained him in an island from Ithaca. Is this a beginning? no; doubtless, the reader would know why Neptune is displeased with Ulysses, and how this prince came to be with Calypso? He would know how he came from Troy thither? The poet answers his demands out of the mouth of Ulysses himself, who relates these things, and begins the action by the recital of his travels from the city of Troy. It signifies little whether the beginning of the action be the beginning of the poem. The beginning of this action is that which happens to Ulysses, when, upon his leaving Troy, he bends his course for Ithaca. The middle comprehends all the misfortunes he endured, and all the disorders of his own government. The end is the re-instating of this hero in the peaceable possession of his kingdom, where he was acknowledged by his son, his wife, his father, and several others. The poet was sensible he should have ended ill, had he gone no farther than the death of these princes, who were the rivals and enemies of Ulysses, because the reader might have looked for some revenge, which the subjects of these princes might have taken, on him who had killed the sovereigns: but this danger over, and the people vanquished and quieted, there was nothing more to be expected. The poem and the action have all their parts, and no more.

But the order of the *Odyssey* differs from that of the *Iliad*, in that the poem does not begin with the beginning of the action.

*Of the Causes and Beginning of the Action.*

The causes of the action are also what the poet is obliged to give an account of. There are three sorts of causes, the humours, the interests, and the designs of men; and these different causes of an action are likewise often the causes of one another, every man taking up those interests in which his humour engages him, and forming those designs to which his humour and interest incline him. Of all these the poet ought to inform his readers, and render them conspicuous in his principal personages.

Homer has ingeniously begun his *Odyssey* with the transactions at Ithaca, during the absence of Ulysses. If he had begun with the travels of his hero, he would scarce have spoken of any one else, and a man might have read a great deal of the poem, without conceiving the least idea of Telemachus, Penelope, or her suitors, who had so great a share in the action; but in the beginning he has pitched upon, besides these personages whom he discovers, he represents Ulysses in his full length, and from the very first opening one sees the interest which the Gods take in the action.

The skill and care of the same poet may be seen likewise in inducing his personages in the first book of his *Iliad*, where he discovers the humours, the interests and the designs of Agamemnon, Achilles, Hector, Ulysses, and several others, and even of the Deities. And in his second he makes a review of the Grecian and Trojan armies, which is full evidence that all we have here said is very necessary.

*Of the Middle or Intrigue of the Action.*

As these causes are the beginning of the action, the opposite designs against that of the hero are the middle of it, and form that difficulty or intrigue, which makes up the greatest part of the poem; the

solution or unravelling commences when the reader begins to see that difficulty removed, and the doubts cleared up. Homer has divided each of his poems into two parts; and has put a particular intrigue, and the solution of it, into each part.

The first part of the *Iliad* is the anger of Achilles, who is for revenging himself upon Agamemnon by the means of Hector and the Trojans. The intrigue comprehends the three days' fight which happened in the absence of Achilles; and it consists on one side in the resistance of Agamemnon and the Grecians; and on the other in the revengeful and inexorable humour of Achilles, which would not suffer him to be reconciled. The loss of the Grecians, and the despair of Agamemnon, prepare for a solution by the satisfaction which the incensed hero received from it. The death of Patroclus joined to the offers of Agamemnon, which of itself had proved ineffectual, remove this difficulty, and make the unravelling of the first part.

This death is likewise the beginning of the second part; since it puts Achilles upon the design of revenging himself on Hector. But the design of Hector is opposite to that of Achilles: this Trojan is valiant, and resolved to stand in his own defence: This valor and resolution of Hector are on his part the cause of the intrigue. All the endeavours Achilles used to meet with Hector, and be the death of him; and the contrary endeavours of the Trojan to keep out of his reach, and defend himself, are the intrigue; which comprehends the battle of the last day. The unravelling begins at the death of Hector; and besides that, it contains the insulting of Achilles over his body, the honors he paid to Patroclus, and the entreaties of king Piram. The regrets of this king and the other Trojans, in the sorrowful obsequies they paid to Hector's body, end the unravelling; they justify the satisfaction of Achilles, and demonstrate his tranquillity.

The first part of the *Odyssey* is the return of

Ulysses into Ithaca. Neptune opposes it by raising tempests, and this makes the intrigue. The unravelling is the arrival of Ulysses upon his own island, where Neptune could offer him no farther injury. The second part is the reinstating this hero in his own government. The princes that are his rivals, oppose him, and this is a fresh intrigue: the solution of it begins at their deaths, and is completed as soon as the Ithacans were appeased.

These two parts in the *Odyssey* have not one common intrigue. The anger of Achilles forms both the intrigues in the *Iliad*, and it is so far the matter of this *Epopœa*, that the very beginning and end of this poem depend on the beginning and end of this anger. But let the desire Achilles, had to revenge himself, and the desire Ulysses had to return to his own country, be never so near allied, yet we cannot place them under one and the same notion: for that desire of Ulysses is not a passion that begins and ends in the poem with the action: it is a natural habit: nor does the poet propose it for his subject, as he does the anger of Achilles.

We have already observed what is meant by the intrigue, and the unravelling thereof: let us now say something of the matter of forming both. These two should arise naturally out of the very essence and subject of the poem, and are to be deduced from thence. Their conduct is so exact and natural, that it seems as if their action had presented them with whatever they inserted, without putting themselves to the trouble of a farther enquiry.

What is more usual and natural to warriors, than anger, heat, passion, and impatience of bearing the least affront or disrespect? This is what forms the intrigue of the *Iliad*: and every thing we read there is nothing else but the effect of this humour and these passions.

What more natural and usual obstacle to those who take voyages, than the sea, the winds, and the storms? Homer makes this the intrigue of the first

part of the *Odyssey* ; and for the second, he makes use of almost the infallible effect of the long absence of the master, whose return is quite despaired of, viz. the insolence of his servants and neighbours, the danger of his son and wife, and the sequestration of his estate. Besides, an absence of almost twenty years, and the insupportable fatigues joined to the age of which Ulysses then was, might induce him to believe that he should not be owned by those who thought him dead, and whose interest it was to have him really so. Therefore if he had presently declared who he was, and had called himself Ulysses, they would easily have destroyed him as an imposter, before he had an opportunity to make himself known.

There could be nothing more natural nor more necessary than this ingenious disguise, to which the advantages his enemies had taken of his absence had reduced him, and to which his long misfortunes had inured him. This allowed him an opportunity, without hazarding any thing, of taking the best measures he could, against those persons who could not so much as mistrust any harm from him. This way was afforded him, by the very nature of his action, to execute his designs, and overcome the obstacles it cast before him. And it is this contest between the prudence and the dissimulation of a single man on one hand, and the ungovernable insolence of so many rivals on the other, which constitutes the intrigue of the second part of the *Odyssey*.

*Of the end or unravelling of the Action.*

If the plot or intrigue must be natural, and such as springs from the very subject, as has been already urged ; then the winding-up of the plot, by a more sure claim, must have this qualification, and be a probable consequence of all that went before. As this is what the readers regard more

than the rest, so should the poet be more exact in it. This is the end of the poem, and the last impression that is to be stamped upon them.

We shall find this in the *Odyssey*. Ulysses by a tempest is cast upon the island of the Phæacians, to whom he discovers himself, and desires they would favour his return to his own country, which was not very far distant. One cannot see any reason why the king of this island should refuse such a reasonable request, to a hero, whom he seemed to have in great esteem. The Phæacians indeed had heard him tell the story of his adventures; and in this fabulous recital consisted all the advantage that he could derive from his presence: for the art of war which they admired in him, his undauntedness under dangers, his indefatigable patience, and other virtues, were such as these islanders were not used to. All their talent lay in singing and dancing, and whatsoever was charming in a quiet life. And here we see how dexterously Homer prepares the incidents he makes use of. These people could do no less, for the account with which Ulysses had so much entertained them, than afford him a ship and a safe convoy, which was of little expence or trouble to them.

When he arrived, his long absence, and the travels which had disfigured him, made him altogether unknown; and the danger he would have incurred, had he discovered himself too soon, forced him to a disguise: lastly, This disguise gave him an opportunity of surprising those young suitors, who for several years together had been accustomed to nothing but to sleep well, and fare daintily.

It was from these examples that Aristotle drew this rule, that "Whatever concludes the poem should so spring from the very constitution of the fable, as if it were a necessary, or at least a probable, consequence."



## SECT. VI.

*The Time of the Action.*

**T**HE time of the epic action is not fixed, like that of the dramatic poem: it is much longer: for an uninterrupted duration is much more necessary in an action which one sees and is present at, than in one which we only read or hear repeated. Besides, tragedy is fuller of passion, and consequently of such a violence as cannot admit of so long a duration.

The *Iliad* containing an action of anger and violence, the poet allows it but a short time, about forty days. The design of the *Odyssey* required another conduct; the character of the hero is prudence and long-suffering; therefore the time of its duration is much longer, above eight years.

*The Passions of the Epic Poem.*

The passions of tragedy are different from those of the epic poem. In the former, terror and pity have the chief place; the passion that seems most peculiar to epic poetry, is admiration.

Besides this admiration, which in general distinguishes the epic poem from the dramatic; each epic poem has likewise some peculiar passion, which distinguishes it in particular from other epic poems, and constitutes a kind of singular and individual difference between these poems of the same species. These singular passions correspond to the character of the hero. Anger and terror reign throughout the *Iliad*, because Achilles is angry, and the most terrible of all men. The *Æneid* has all soft and tender passions, because that is the character of Æneas. The prudence, wisdom, and constancy of Ulysses do not allow him either of those extremes; therefore the poet does not permit one of them to be predominant in the *Odyssey*. He confines himself to

admiration only, which he carries to an higher pitch than in the Iliad; and it is upon this account that he introduces a great many more machines, in the Odyssey, into the body of the action, than are to be seen in the actions of the other two poems.

### *The Manners.*

The manners of the epic poem ought to be poetically good, but it is not necessary they be always morally so. They are poetically good, when one may discover the virtue or vice, the good or ill inclinations of every one who speaks or acts; they are poetically bad, when persons are made to speak or act out of character, or inconsistently or unequally. The manners of Æneas and of Mezentius are equally good, considered poetically, because they equally demonstrate the piety of the one, and the impiety of the other.

### *Character of the Hero.*

It is requisite to make the same distinction between a hero in morality and a hero in poetry, as between moral and poetical goodness. Achilles had as much right to the latter as Æneas. Aristotle says, that the hero of a poem should be neither good nor bad; neither advanced above the rest of mankind by his virtues, or sunk beneath them by his vices; that he may be the proper and fuller example to others, both what to imitate and what to decline.

The other qualifications of the manners are, that they be suitable to the causes which either raise or discover them in the persons; that they have an exact resemblance to what history, or fable, have delivered of those persons, to whom they are ascribed; and that there be an equality in them, so that no man is made to act or speak, out of his character.

*Unity of the Character.*

But this equality is not sufficient for the unity of the character; it is further necessary, that the same spirit appear in all sort of encounters. Thus *Æneas* acting with great piety and mildness in the first part of the *Æneid*, which requires no other character; and afterwards, appearing illustrious in heroic valor, in the wars in the second part; but there, without any appearance either of a hard or a soft disposition; would doubtless, be far from offending against the equality of the manners: but yet there would be no simplicity or unity in the character. So that, besides the qualities that claim their particular place upon different occasions, there must be one appearing throughout, which commands over all the rest; and without this, we may affirm, it is no character.

One may indeed make a hero as valiant as *Achilles*, as pious as *Æneas*, and as prudent as *Ulysses*. But it is a mere chimera, to imagine a hero that has the valor of *Achilles*, the piety of *Æneas*, and the prudence of *Ulysses*, at one and the same time. This vision might happen to an author, who would suit the character of a hero to whatever each part of the action might naturally require, without regarding the essence of the fable, or the unity of the character in the same person upon all sorts of occasions; this hero would be the mildest, best-natured prince in the world, and also the most choleric, hard-hearted, and implacable creature imaginable; he would be extremely tender like *Æneas*, extremely violent like *Achilles*, and yet have the indifference of *Ulysses*, that is incapable of the two extremes. Would it not be in vain for the poet to call this person by the same name throughout?

Let us reflect on the effects it would produce in several poems, whose authors were of opinion, that

the chief character of a hero is that of an accomplished man. They would be all alike; all valiant in battle, prudent in council, pious in the acts of religion, courteous, civil, magnificent; and, lastly, endued with all the prodigious virtues any poet could invent. All this would be independent from the action and the subject of the poem; and upon seeing each hero separated from the rest of the work, we should not easily guess, to what action, and to what poem the hero belonged. So that we should see, that none of those would have a character; since the character is that, which makes a person discernible, and which distinguishes him from all others.

This commanding quality in Achilles, is his anger; in Ulysses, the art of dissimulation; in Æneas, meekness. Each of these may be styled, by way of eminence, the character in these heroes.

But these characters cannot be alone. It is absolutely necessary that some other should give them a lustre, and embellish them as far as they are capable: either by hiding the defects that are in each, by some noble and shining qualities; as the poet has done the anger of Achilles, by shading it with extraordinary valor: or by making them entirely of the nature of a true and solid virtue, as is to be observed in the two others. The dissimulation of Ulysses is a part of his prudence; and the meekness of Æneas is wholly employed in submitting his will to the Gods. For the making up of this union, our poets have joined together such qualities as are by nature the most compatible; valor with anger, meekness with piety, and prudence with dissimulation. This last union was necessary for the goodness of Ulysses: for, without that, his dissimulation might have degenerated into wickedness and double-dealing.

## SECT. VII.

*Of the Machinery.*

**WE** come now to the machines of the epic poem. The chief passion which it aims to excite being admiration, nothing is so conducive to that as the marvellous; and the importance and dignity of the action is by nothing so greatly elevated as by the care and interposition of Heaven.

These machines are of three sorts. Some are Theological, and were invented to explain the nature of the Gods. Others are physical, and represent the things of nature. The last are moral, and are the images of virtues and vices.

Homer and the ancients have given to their Deities the manners, passions, and vices of men. Their poems are wholly allegorical; and in this view it is easier to defend Homer, than to blame him. We cannot accuse him for making mention of many Gods, for his bestowing passions upon them, or even introducing them fighting against men. The Scripture uses the like figures and expressions.

If it be allowable to speak thus of the Gods in Theology, much more in the fictions of natural philosophy; where, if a poet describes the Deities, he must give them such manners, speeches, and actions as are conformable to the nature of the things they represent under those divinities. The case is the same in the morals of the Deities; Minerva is wise, because she represents prudence; Venus is both good or bad, because the passion of love is capable of these contrary qualities.

Since among the Gods of a poem some are good, some bad, and some indifferently either; and since of our passions we make so many allegorical Deities; we may attribute to the Gods all that is done in the poem, whether good or evil. But these Deities do not act constantly in one and the same manner.

Sometimes they act invisibly, and by mere inspiration; which has nothing in it extraordinary or miraculous: being no more than what we say every day, "That some God has assisted us, or some " dæmon has instigated us."

At other times they appear visibly, and manifest themselves to men, in a manner altogether miraculous and preternatural.

The third way has something of both the others; it is in truth a miracle, but is not commonly so accounted: this includes dreams, oracles, &c.

All these ways must be probable; for however necessary the marvellous is to the epic action, as nothing is so conducive to admiration; yet we can, on the other hand, admire nothing, that we think impossible. Though the probability of these machines be of a very large extent, (since it is founded upon Divine Power) it is not without limitations. There are numerous instances of allowable and probable machines in the epic poem, where the Gods are no less actors than the men. But the less credible sort such as metamorphoses, &c. are far more rare.

This suggests a reflection on the method of rendering those machines probable, which in their own nature are hardly so. Those, which require only divine probability, should be so disengaged from the action, that one might subtract them from it, without destroying the action. But those, which are essential and necessary, should be grounded upon human probability, and not on the sole power of God. Thus the episodes of Circe, the Syrens, Polyphemus, &c. are necessary to the action of the *Odyssey*, and yet not humanly probable: yet Homer has artificially reduced them to human probability, by the simplicity and ignorance of the Phæacians, before whom he causes those recitals to be made.

The next question is, Where and on what occasions, machines may be used? It is certain Homer and Virgil make use of them every where, and scarce suffer any action to be performed without

them. Petronius makes this a precept: "Per am bages, deorumque ministeria, &c." The Gods are mentioned in the very proposition of their works, the invocation is addrest to them, and the whole narration is full of them. The Gods are the causes of the action, they form the intrigue, and bring about the solution. The precept of Aristotle and Horace, that the unravelling of the plot should not proceed from a miracle, or the appearance of a God, has place only in dramatic poetry, not in the epic. For it is plain, that both in the solution of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Gods are concerned: in the former, the Deities meet to appease the anger of Achilles: Iris and Mercury are sent to that purpose, and Minerva eminently assists Achilles in the decisive combat with Hector. In the *Odyssey*, the same Goddess fights close by Ulysses against the suitors, and concludes that peace betwixt him and the Ithacensians, which completes the poem.

We may therefore determine, that a machine is not an invention to extricate the poet out of any difficulty which embarrasses him: but that the presence of a Divinity, and some action surprising and extraordinary, are inserted into almost all the parts of his work, in order to render it more majestic and more admirable. But this mixture ought to be so made, that the machines might be retrenched, without taking any thing from the action: at the same time that it gives the readers a lesson of piety and virtue; and teaches them, that the most brave and the most wise can do nothing, and attain nothing great and glorious, without the assistance of Heaven. Thus the machinery crowns the whole work, and renders it at once marvellous, probable, and moral.

**THE**  
**ODYSSEY.**  
**BOOK I.**



## ARGUMENT.

### *Minerva's Descent to Ithaca.*

The Poem opens within forty-eight days of the arrival of Ulysses in his dominions. He had now remained seven years in the island of Calypso, when the Gods assembled in council proposed the method of his departure from thence, and his return to his native country. For this purpose it is concluded to send Mercury to Calypso, and Pallas immediately descends to Ithaca. She holds a conference with Telemachus, in the shape of Mentès, king of the Taphians; in which she advises him to take a journey in quest of his father Ulysses, to Pylos and Sparta, where Nestor and Menelaus yet reigned; then, after having visibly displayed her divinity, disappears. The suitors of Penelope make great entertainments, and riot in her palace till night. Phemius sings to them the return of the Grecians, till Penelope puts a stop to the song. Some words arise between the suitors and Telemachus, who summons the council to meet the day following.

THE  
ODYSSEY.

BOOK I.

**T**HE man for wisdom's various arts renown'd,  
Long exercis'd in woes, O muse! resound;  
Who, when his arms had wrought the destin'd fall  
Of sacred Troy, and raz'd her heaven-built wall,  
Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd, 5  
Their manners noted, and their states survey'd.  
On stormy seas unnumber'd toils he bore,  
Safe with his friends to gain his natal shore:  
Vain toils! their impious folly dar'd to prey  
On herds devoted to the God of day; 10  
The god vindictive doom'd them never more  
(Ah, men unblest'd!) to touch that natal shore.  
O snatch some portion of these acts from fate,  
Celestial muse! and to our world relate.

Now at their native realms the Greeks arriv'd;  
All who the war of ten long years surviv'd, 16  
And scap'd the perils of the gulfy main.  
Ulysses, sole of all the victor train,  
An exile from his dear paternal coast,  
Deplor'd his absent queen, and empire lost. 20  
Calypso in her caves constrain'd his stay,  
With sweet, reluctant, amorous delay:  
In vain—for now the circling years disclose  
The day predestin'd to reward his woes.  
At length his Ithaca is given by fate, 25  
Where yet new labours his arrival wait;  
At length their rage the hostile powers restrain,  
All but the ruthless monarch of the main.

But now the god, remote, a heavenly guest,  
In Ethiopia grac'd the genial feast ; 30  
(A race divided, whom with sloping rays  
The rising and descending sun surveys) ;  
There on the world's extremest verge, rever'd  
With hecatombs and prayer in pomp preferr'd,  
Distant he lay ; while in the bright abodes 35  
Of high Olympus Jove conven'd the gods :  
The' assembly thus the sire supreme address'd,  
Egysthus' fate revolving in his breast,  
Whom young Orestes to the dreary coast  
Of Pinto sent, a blood-polluted ghost : 40  
    ' Perverse mankind ! whose wills, created free,  
Charge all their woes on absolute decree ;  
All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,  
And follies are miscall'd the crimes of fate.  
When to his lust Egysthus gave the rein, 45  
Did fate, or we, the' adulterous act constrain ?  
Did fate, or we, when great Atrides died,  
Urge the bold traitor to the regicide ?  
Hermes I sent, while yet his soul remain'd  
Sincere from royal blood, and faith profan'd ; 50  
To warn the wretch, that young Orestes, grown  
To manly years, should re-assert the throne.  
Yet impotent of mind, and uncontroll'd,  
He plung'd into the gulf which heaven foretold.' 54  
    Here paus'd the god ; and pensive thus replies  
Minerva, graceful with her azure eyes :  
    ' O thou ! from whom the whole creation springs,  
The source of power on earth deriv'd to kings !  
His death was equal to the direful deed ;  
So may the man of blood be doom'd to bleed ! 60  
But grief and rage alternate wound my breast  
For brave Ulysses, still by fate oppress'd,  
Amidst an isle, around whose rocky shore  
The forests murmur, and the surges roar,  
The blameless hero from his wish'd-for home 65  
A goddess guards in her enchanted dome.  
(Atlas her sire, to whose far-piercing eye  
The wonders of the deep expanded lie ;

The' eternal columns which on earth he rears  
End in the starry vault, and prop the spheres.) 70  
By his fair daughter is the chief confin'd,  
Who soothes to dear delight his anxious mind :

Successless all her soft caresses prove,  
To banish from his breast his country's love;  
To see the smoke from his lov'd palace rise,  
While the dear isle in distant prospect lies,  
With what contentment could he close his eyes? }

And will Omnipotence neglect to save  
The suffering virtue of the wise and brave?  
Must he, whose altars on the Phrygian shore 80  
With frequent rites, and pure, avow'd thy pow'r,  
Be doom'd the worst of human ills to prove,  
Unbless'd, abandon'd to the wrath of Jove?

' Daughter ! what words have pass'd thy lips un-  
weigh'd ?

(Replied the thunderer to the martial maid) 85

Deem not unjustly by my doom oppress'd  
Of human race the wisest and the best.

Neptune, by prayer repentant rarely won,  
Afflicts the chief, to' avenge his giant son,  
Whose visual orb Ulysses robb'd of light ; 90

Great Polypheme, of more than mortal might !  
Him young Thoösa bore (the bright increase  
Of Phorcys, dreaded in the sounds and seas),

Whom Neptune ey'd with bloom of beauty bless'd,  
And in his cave the yielding nymph compress'd. 95

For this the god constrains the Greek to roam, \*  
A hopeless exile from his native home,

From death alone exempt—but cease to mourn ;  
Let all combine to' achieve his wish'd return :

Neptune aton'd, his wrath shall now refrain, 100  
Or thwart the synod of the gods in vain.'

' Father and king ador'd ! Minerva cried,  
Since all who in the' Olympian bower reside  
Now make the wandering Greek their public care,  
Let Hermes to the' Atlantic isle \* repair ; 105

\* Ogygia.